

**JOHN VARHOLM'S
HEIR, OR, THE
DENWOLD MILLS**

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John Varholm's Heir, Or, The Denwold Mills by E. E. Armes

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TO MY FRIENDS

WITHOUT WHOSE CONSTANT SYMPATHY,

ENCOURAGEMENT AND

ASSISTANCE, THIS BOOK COULD

NEVER HAVE BEEN

PUBLISHED

"The higher the state of civilization, the more completely do the actions of one member of the social body influence all the rest, and the less possible is it for any one man to do a wrong thing without interfering more or less with the freedom of all his fellow-citizens."

—*Professor Huxley.*

JOHN VARHOLM'S HEIR

CHAPTER I.

TEN o'clock on a bright June morning! Not a sound broke the stillness, except the occasional flutter of a bird among the leaves, and the hum of insects in the grass. A little dash of rain the previous night had laid the dust, and the crystal drops still clung to the grass-blades and rested on the pink and white clover-heads in the shade of the elms and maples.

The stranger who was walking leisurely along the platform had reached the town by the 9.40 express, and unconscious of being closely watched by the crowd which usually lounged around the depot, paused and was glancing curiously about. As the huge engine drew out of the station, he lifted his hat to a fellow traveler who stood on the platform of the rear car; then, as the train, winding around the bend, vanished from sight, those who were nearest saw, or thought they saw, a look of regret in his eyes as he turned away.

For a moment he seemed undecided, and then collecting himself with a visible effort, he approached a porter and made inquiry. For answer, the latter dropped his box and accompanied him a few rods down the street, pointed

out a shady road, gave him some simple directions, then stood gazing curiously, first at the piece of money in his hand, then at the man who walked away with quick, nervous strides.

"By St. George and the Dragon!"—Laity was an Englishman—"I believe that's the heir himself, an' a mighty good-looking, smooth-spoken chap he is, too! Guess we needn't be afraid o' him, if he has got all the old man's money! Leastwise, I ain't. I wish there were more like him!" and his hand closed tightly over the piece of silver.

"Do you think so?" and Tom Dawson, who had been edging away from the men who were hanging around Powell's saloon near the corner, came up beside him, and stood with mouth wide open, staring after the retreating figure.

"Do you think so? Then he'll be no match for the Colonel, and God help the hands!"

"Why, what's the matter, Tom? Have you and the Colonel quarreled? Bense said you was his right-hand man. Did he kick you out, as he did Bense for that good-for-nothin' Dutcher? I see him las' night, Dutchy, I mean, an' I heerd him talk, too. I was down to the Corners with a trunk, an' while I was a-waiting, him an' another fellow they called Kateson come along. By St. G—, but they were full of fire an' brimstone! They didn't see me at first, or mebbe they didn't care if they did—but if the Colonel don't keep a watch on 'em he'll be sorry," and giving another glance down the road, Laity went back to his work.